The Karaham Dancers

You remember so much of your childhood
Clinging to memory, rummaging in your mind
For fragments of lost thoughts.

You recall, watching this virtuoso dancer
On the stage, the brass pot balanced on her head
Her feet oh so nimble, treading the brass tray
As the earth shakes the sky, the air vibrates
With tremors of the Krishna legends

Yes, you remember, feel like weeping
Looking back on the past and the Karaham dancers
Dancing on the knives, in your village
Heavy-handled wide blades onto which
They stepped, balanced on the edge of steel,
       Dancing to the goddess Pattini
Her emblems borne on their heads,
The leaves of the bitter margosa.

As bitter now as memory,
The memory of the past, ghosts, the dead.

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